

Virginia High School Safety Study:

Research to identify more effective discipline policies and safety practices

Dewey Cornell, Anne Gregory, Xitao Fan, & Peter Sheras
Curry School of Education
University of Virginia

434-924-8929

Email: youthvio@virginia.edu

Website: youthviolence.edschool.virginia.edu



Virginia High School Safety Study

Conducted by a research team at the Curry School of Education (Cornell, Gregory, Fan, & Sheras)

In collaboration with:

- Virginia Department of Education
- Department of Criminal Justice Services
and Center for School Safety

Funded by U.S. Dept. of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention



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Conceptual model for study

Two strategies underlie school safety efforts:

- 1. Structure** – school discipline and order
- 2. Student support** – efforts to support and engage students

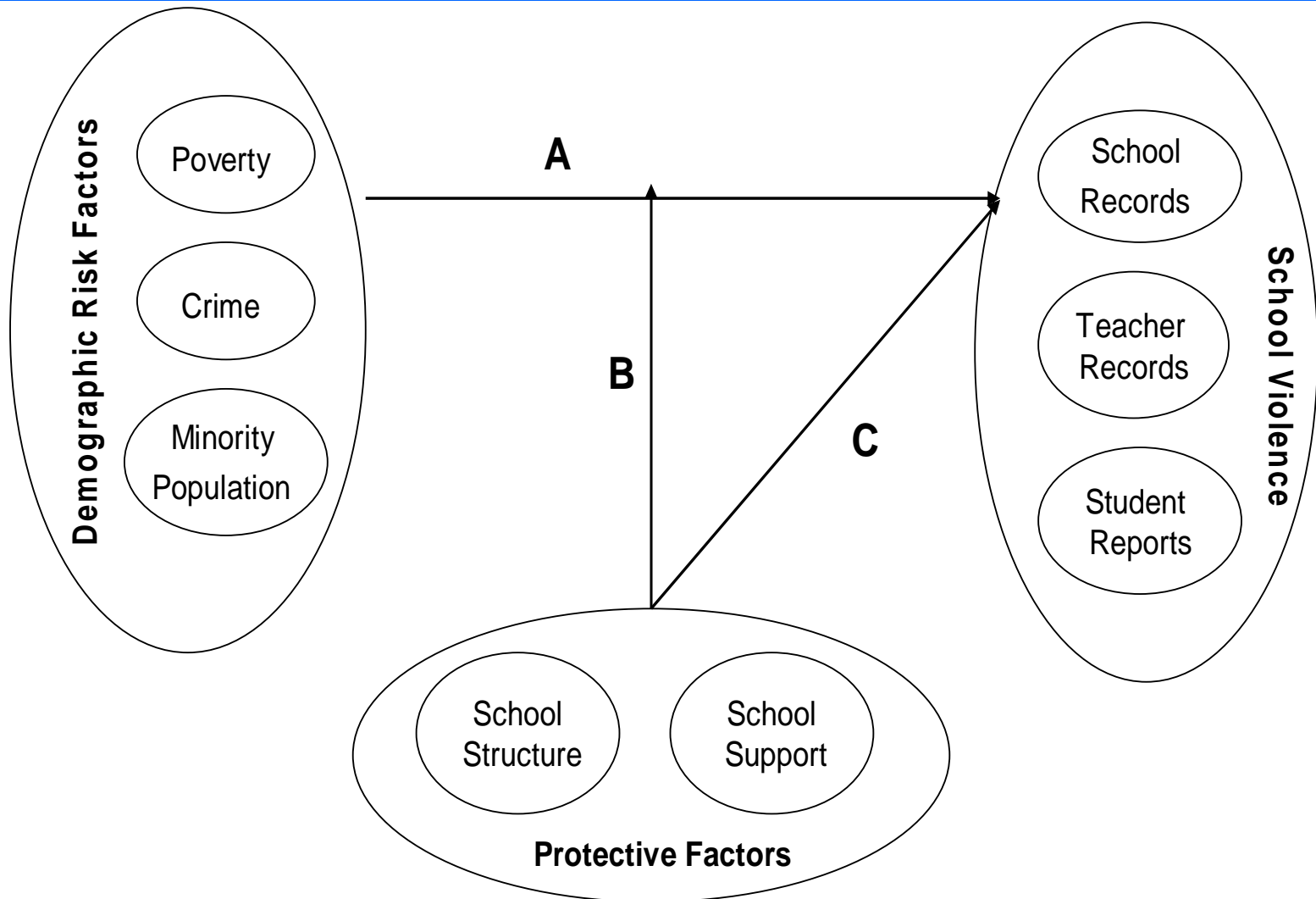


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How will differences in student population be considered?

1. Neighborhood poverty using census data
2. Neighborhood crime using NIBRS data
3. Student minority status

Data collected for each high school district



Risk Factors

Protective Factors

Outcome

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How were participants selected?

1. Principal selects teachers and students from alphabetical list using random numbers
2. Principal sends letter to teachers and parents
3. Anyone who declines is replaced by alternates
4. 25 students and 10 teachers per high school

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How was the survey carried out?

Written and video instructions for

- Principals
- Teachers
- Students



Adrianna Sgarlata, Miss Virginia 2006

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Who participated in the study?

296 of 314 schools (94%)

1. 7,431 ninth grade students
2. 2,353 ninth grade teachers

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School climate measures

1. Structure

- Experience of school rules
- Security measures
- Daily structure

2. Support

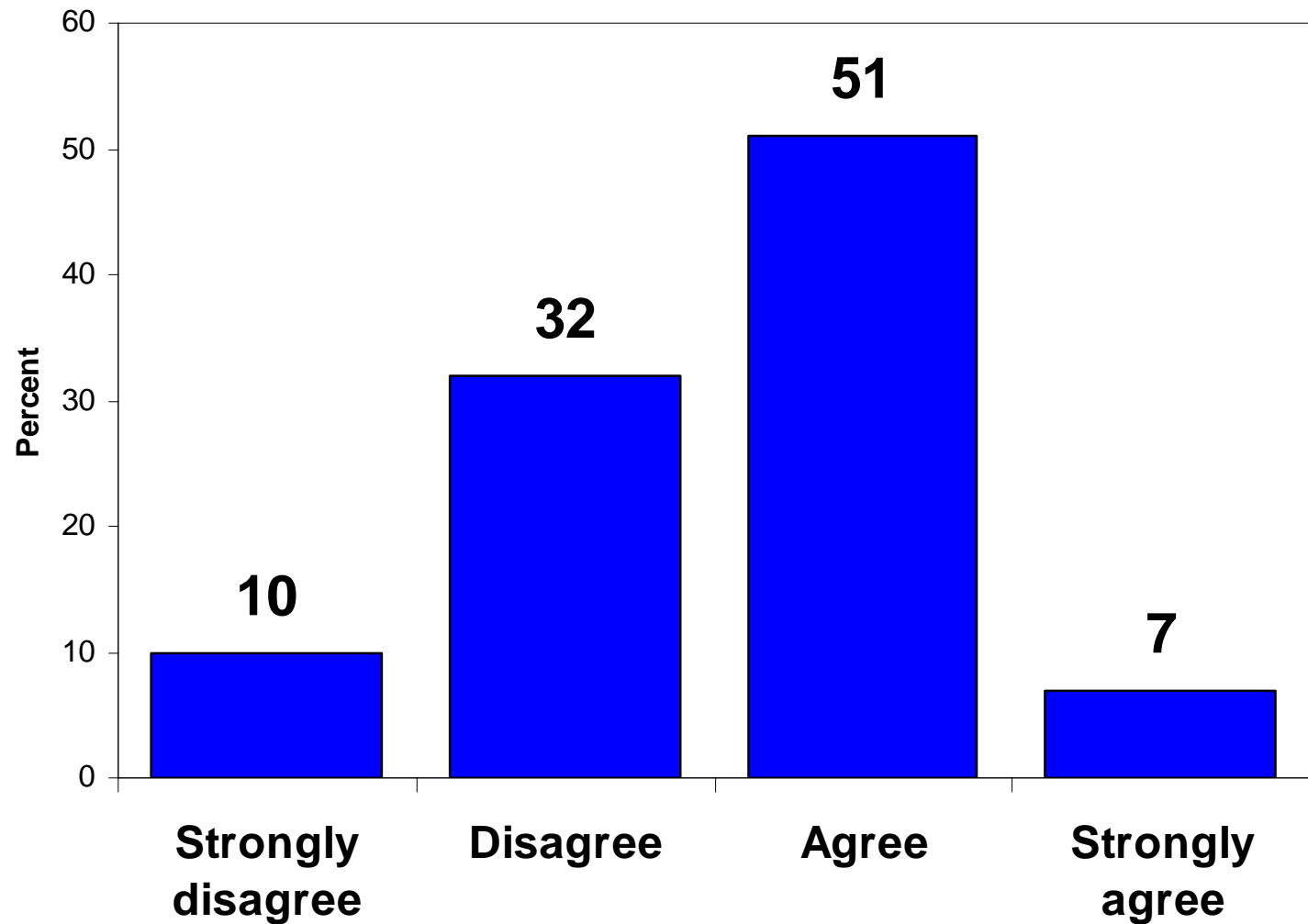
- Willingness to seek help
- Learning environment scale

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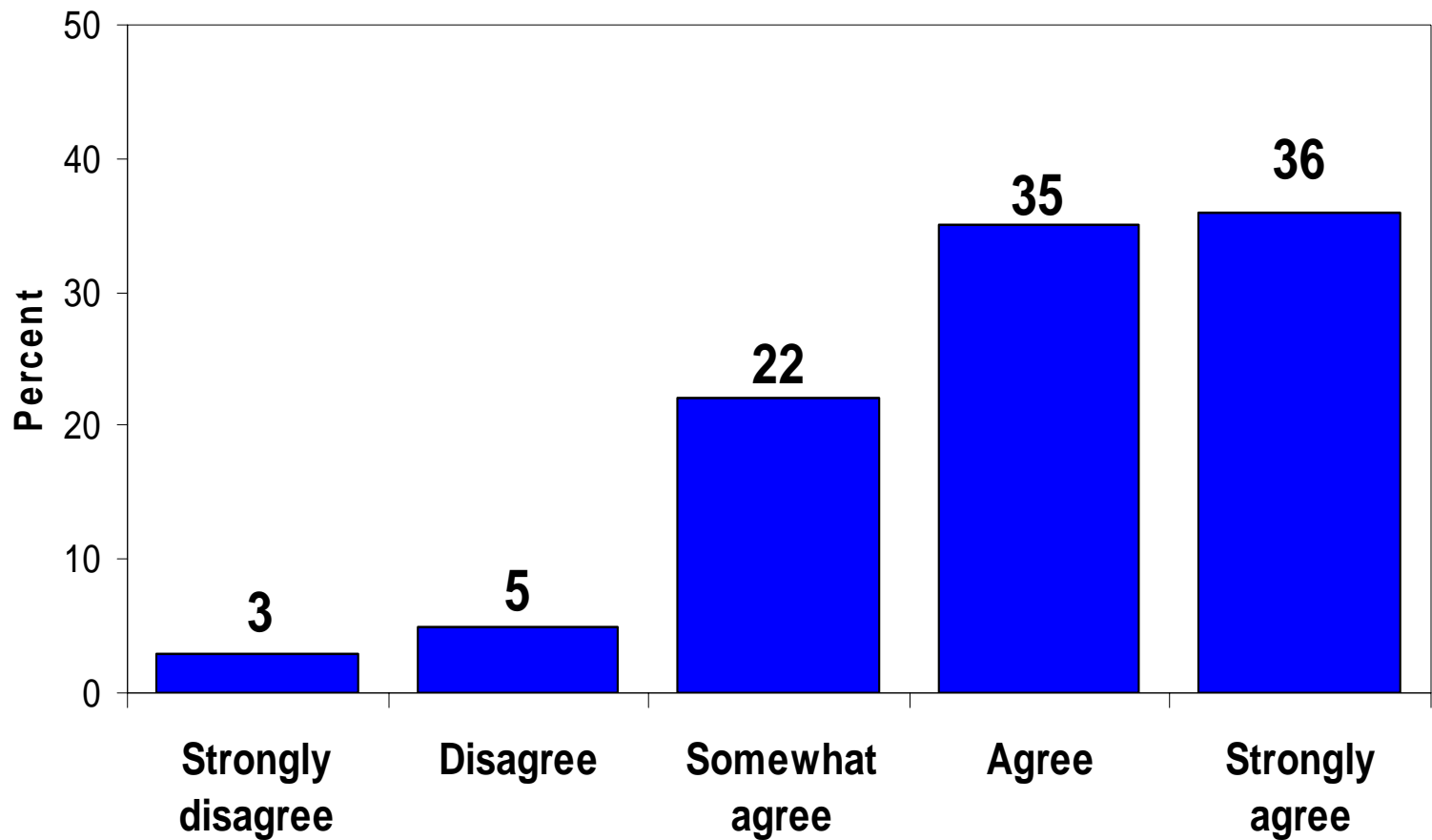
Outcome Measures

1. School engagement
 - Commitment to school
 - Trust in teacher authority
 - School activities
2. Victimization
3. Bullying

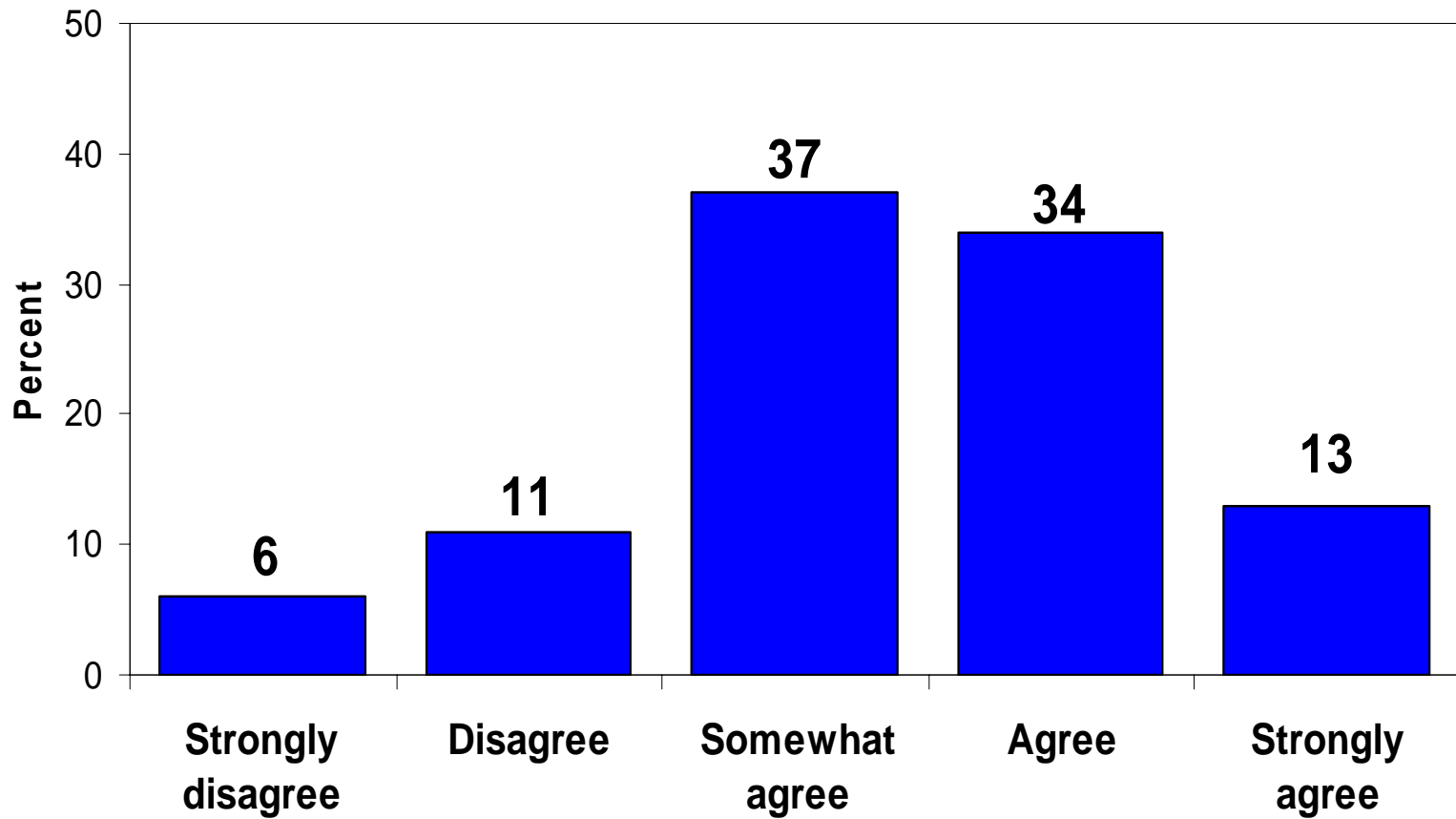
The school rules are fair.



Adults in this school want all students to do
their best.



Adults in this school really care about all students



Daily Structure Scale

How likely are the following?

**Not at all
Likely/ Not
Likely**

**Likely/
Very
Likely**

If a student was wandering in the hallways during class time, how likely would an adult stop the student?

48

52

If a student cut a class, how likely would the student be caught?

41

59

If a student smoked a cigarette at school, how likely would the student be caught?

37

63

If two students got into a fight at school, how likely would they get caught?

8

92

If a student was five minutes late for class, how likely would teachers overlook it?

56

44

If a student said something sarcastic to a teacher, how likely would the teacher overlook what the student said?

43

57

Victimization

This year in school have any of the following happened to you personally in the school?

False

True

Damage to personal property worth more than \$10.

85

15

Theft of personal property worth more than \$10.

80

20

Was physically attacked and had to see a doctor

96

4

Was physically attacked, but not serious enough to see a doctor.

87

13

Received obscene remarks or gestures from a student.

49

51

Was threatened in remarks by a student.

72

28

Had a weapon pulled on me.

96

4

Bullying Climate Scale

**Disagree/
Strongly
Disagree**

**Agree/
Strongly
Agree**

Bullying is a problem at this school.

53

47

Students here often get teased about their clothing or physical appearance.

29

71

Students here often get put down because of their race or ethnicity.

65

35

New students are made to feel welcome here by other students.

30

70

Students from different neighborhoods get along well together here.

28

72

There is a lot of teasing about sexual topics at this school.

45

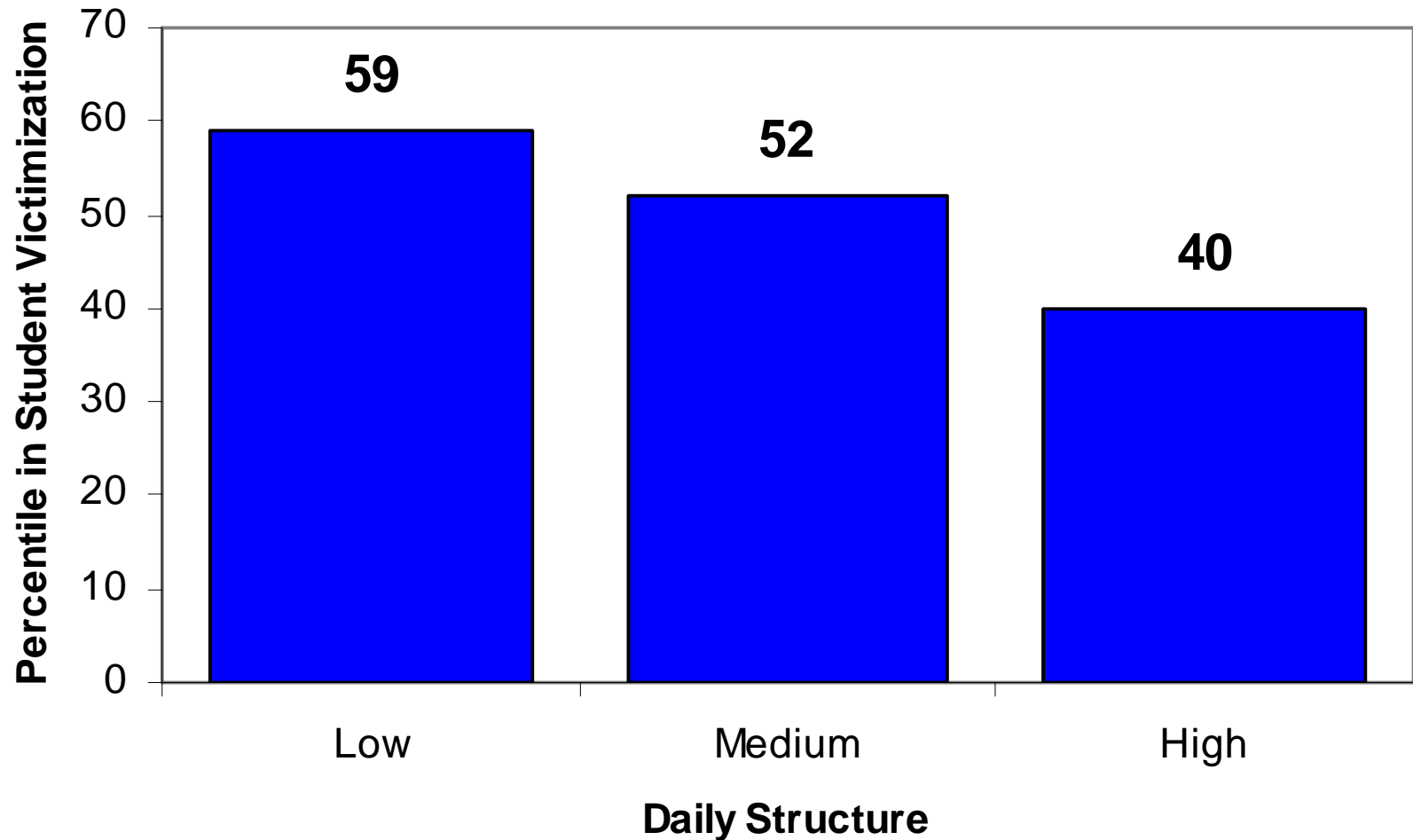
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Students at this school accept me for who I am.

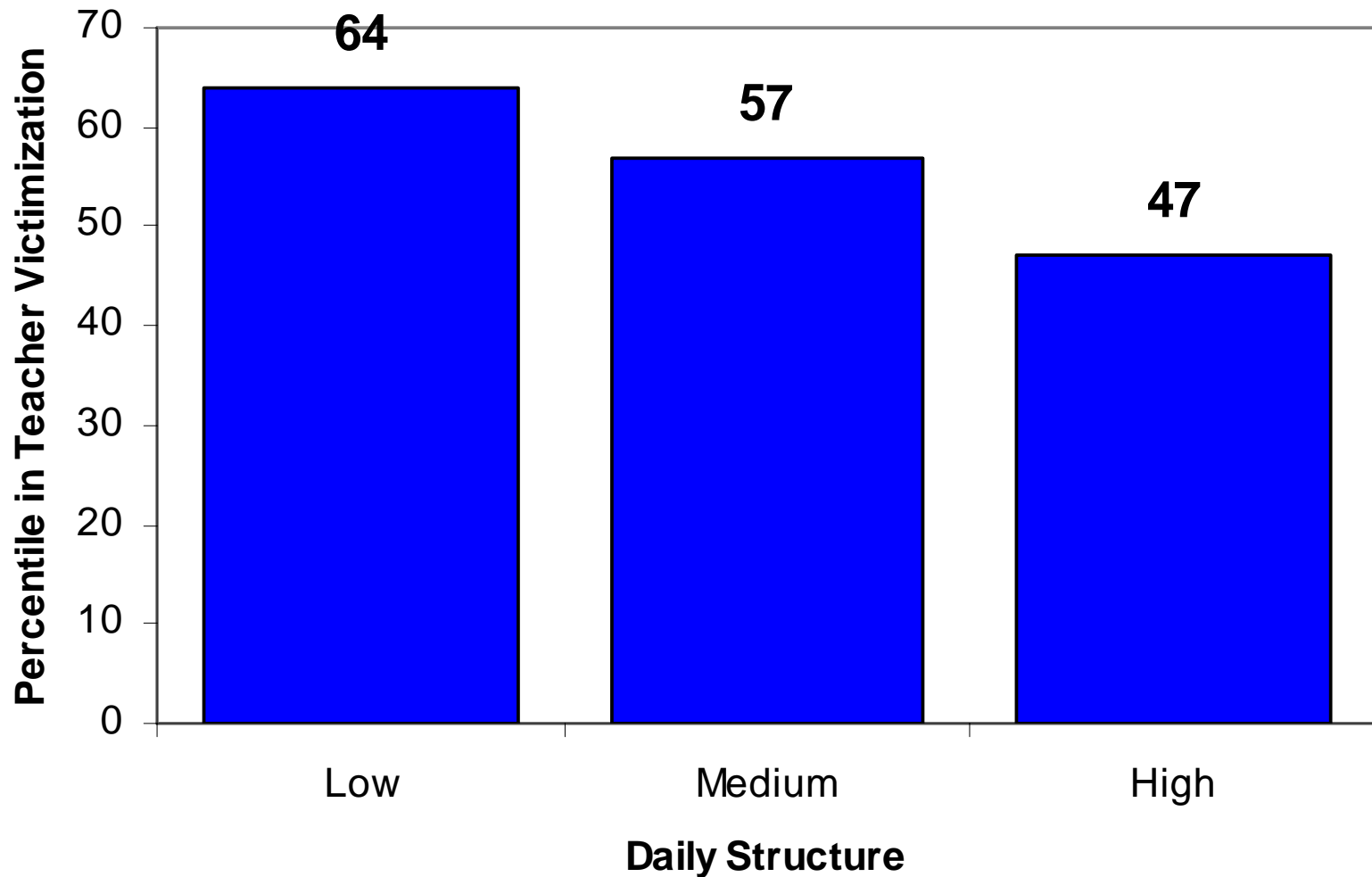
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81

Schools with high daily structure have relatively low student victimization.

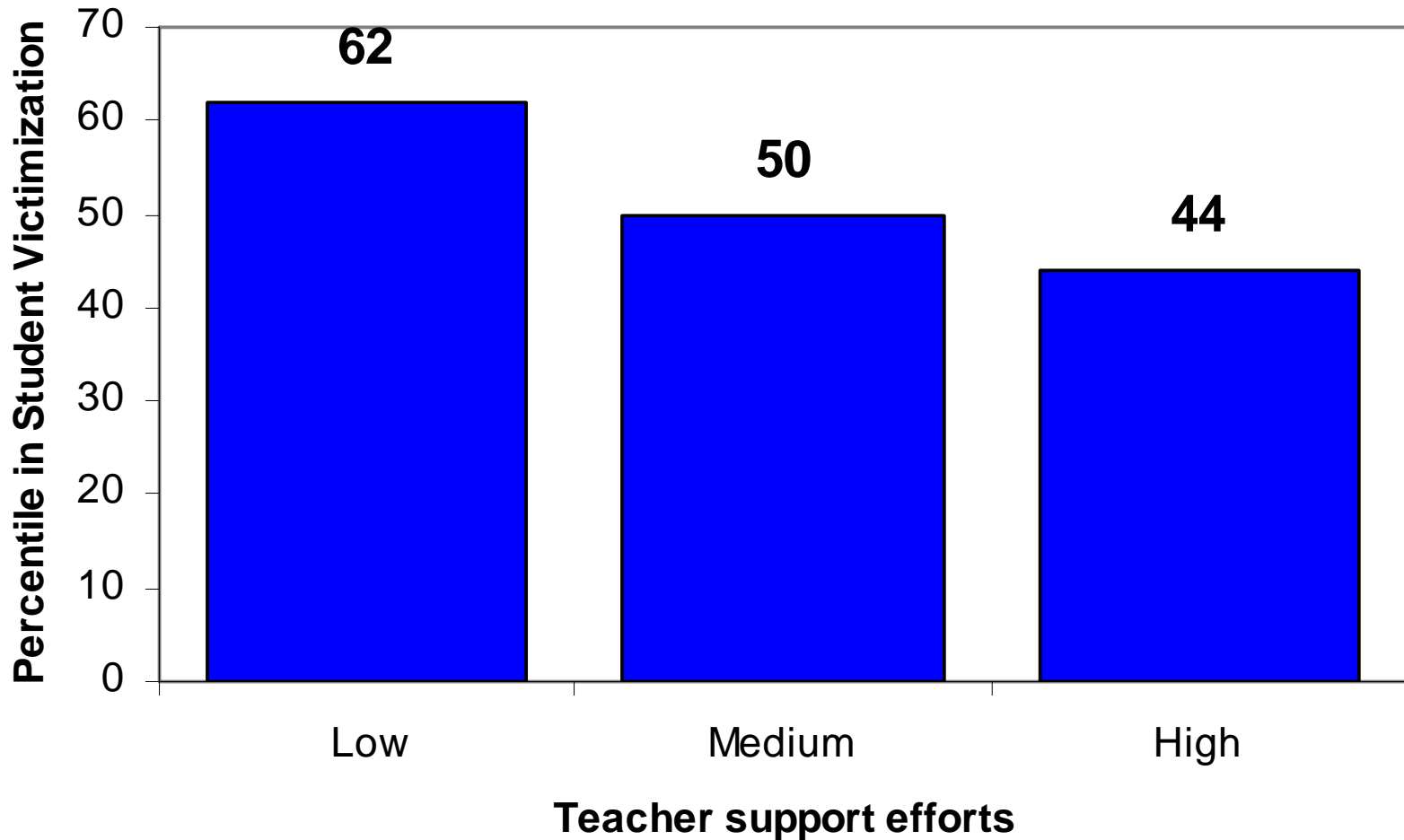


Schools with high daily structure have relatively low teacher victimization.

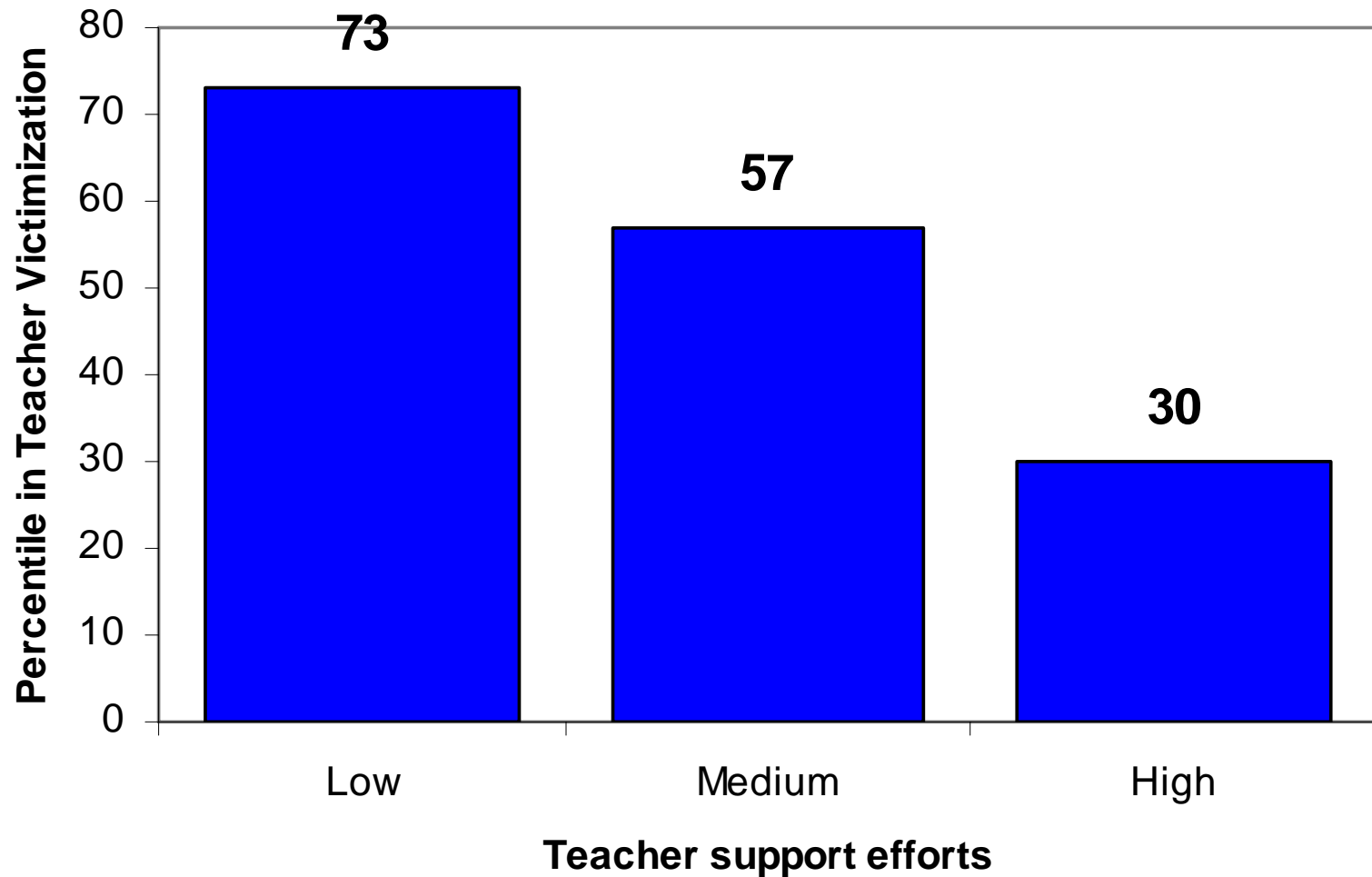


Learning/Working Environment Scale How much do you agree that adults in this school...	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree/ Strongly Agree
Really care about all students.	17	37	46
Acknowledge and pay attention to students.	14	38	48
Want all students to do their best.	8	22	70
Listen to what students have to say.	21	38	41
Believe that every student can be a success.	18	29	53
Treat all students fairly.	37	30	33
Support and treat students with respect.	19	34	47
Feel a responsibility to improve the school.	18	33	49

Schools with high teacher support have relatively low student victimization.



Schools with high teacher support have relatively low teacher victimization.



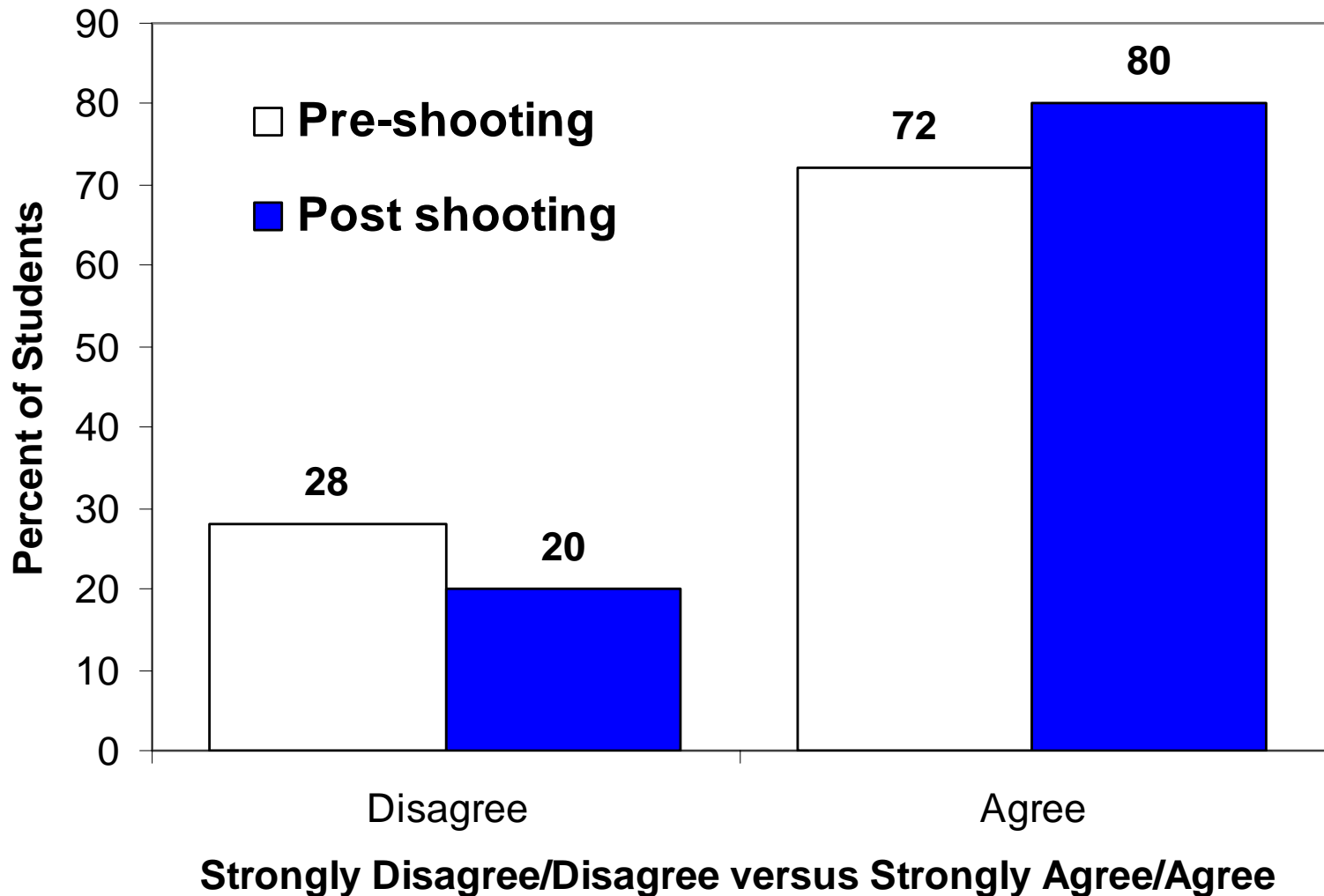
Virginia Tech Shooting Effects

Student survey scale	Pre-Shooting N \approx 900		Post-Shooting N \approx 6000		t value	<i>p</i>	Effect size
	X	(SD)	X	(SD)			
Belief in school rules	49.1	(9.42)	49.1	(9.01)	.03	.97	--
Teacher trust	14.0	(2.90)	14.0	(2.89)	.58	.56	--
Victimization	1.4	(1.53)	1.3	(1.48)	1.35	.18	--
Bullying victimization	1.4	(2.22)	1.3	(2.11)	.78	.44	--
Bullying climate	16.6	(3.52)	16.7	(3.33)	.97	.33	--

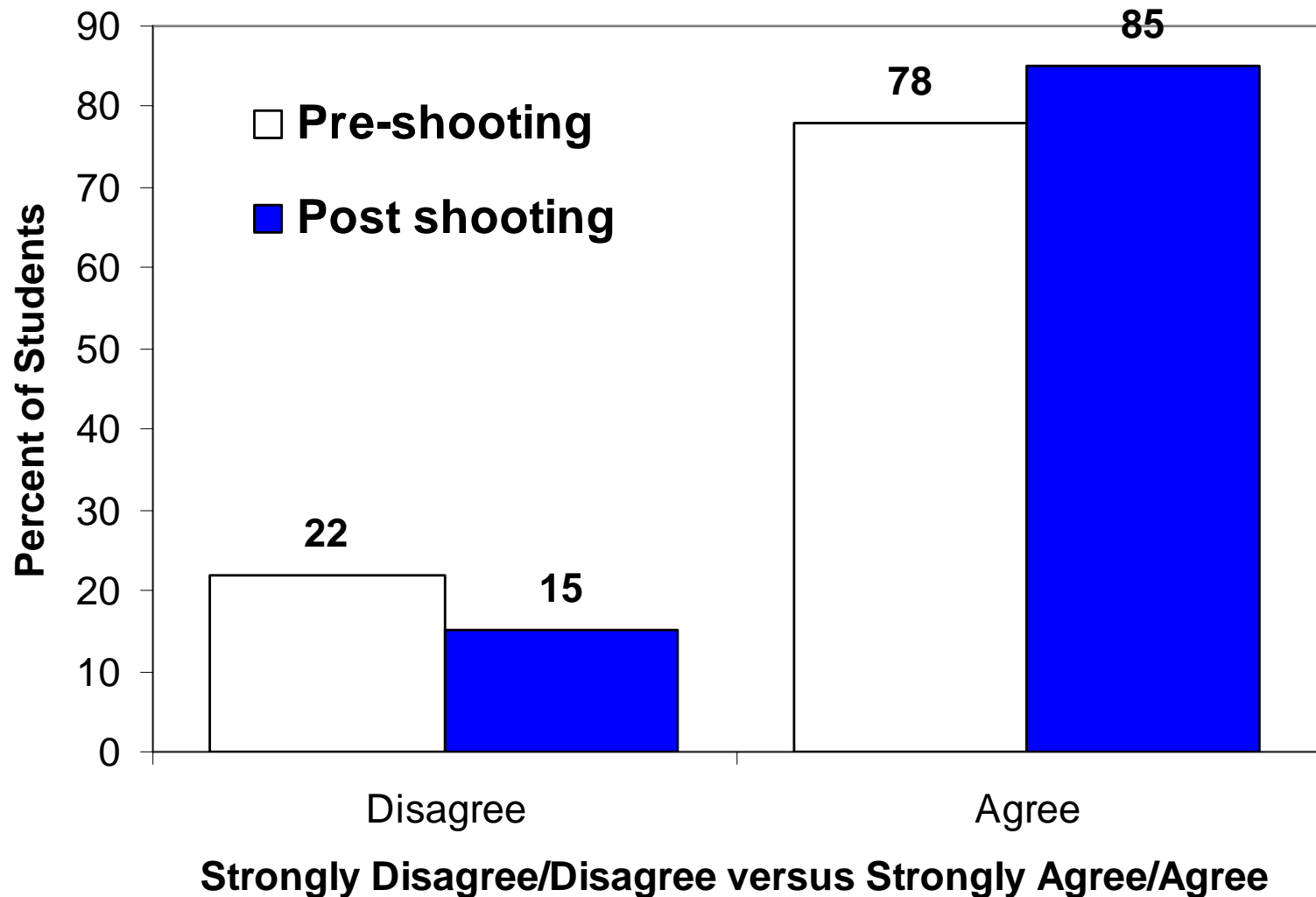
Virginia Tech Shooting Effects

Student survey scale	Pre-Shooting N \approx 900		Post-Shooting N \approx 6000		t value	<i>p</i>	Effect size
	X	(SD)	X	(SD)			
Experience of school rules (decreased)	19.4	(3.19)	19.1	(3.37)	2.03	.04	.09
Security measures (no change)	4.9	(1.53)	4.8	(1.52)	1.47	.14	--
Daily structure (decreased)	16.6	(2.61)	16.4	(2.59)	2.00	.05	.08
Learning environment (increased)	26.8	(7.01)	27.4	(6.75)	2.44	.02	.09
Willingness to seek help (increased)	21.8	(4.88)	22.3	(4.61)	3.31	.001	.11

**If another student talked about killing
someone, I would tell one of the teachers
or staff at school.**



**If another student brought a gun to school,
I would tell one of the teachers or staff at
school.**



Future Reports

- What structure and support practices are strongest predictors of school safety? SOL success?
- How much can be attributed to neighborhood crime and poverty?
- Are there more effective strategies for schools with different student populations?
- How can we reduce suspensions and expulsions?